

# **WHAT IS THE TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION?**



**THE GREAT RED DRAGON?  
OR  
BROTHERHOOD?**

**WALTER BROWN MURRAY**

# What Is The True Christian Religion?

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Several hundred varieties of interpretations of the Christian religion exist, many differing widely from each other. These differences are sometimes slight, but in many cases hopelessly antagonistic one to the other. In this situation it would seem useful to get at the fundamental teachings of the Sacred Scriptures upon which the Christian religion is based.

Each separate denomination, or variety of belief, is confident that it has arrived at the fundamental truth of religion. But since they differ so greatly one from the other, it is evident that many of them are mistaken.

Is it possible to arrive at any satisfactory solution based on the Scriptures and on rational thought?

This book is an attempt to do precisely this. It is not written to justify current and widely popular ideas of fundamental teachings, but it is a new understanding of Christian doctrine. People with closed minds will not be able to accept any other than their own view, but in this New Age when so much of past misunderstanding on all subjects has been exposed it is undoubtedly true that an unbiased mind will be able to judge upon the basis of the facts in the case.

By

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## P R E F A C E

What is the true Christian religion?

There is no manner of doubt in the minds of most Christians. It is the so-called "Plan of Salvation." It is universally taught.

But there are some who question. Many deny the almost universally accepted Plan of Salvation. But what substitute idea have they to offer which has the powerful appeal of the popular Plan of Salvation? In opposing the popular view many have lost the supernatural view of religion and of the Bible itself.

Is there any question as to the Plan of Salvation being the true teaching of the Bible,—any question, that is, worthy of being considered by honest-minded people in view of the plain teaching of the Bible?

This is only the preface to a discussion, but one may ask, "Is it necessarily true that whatever the majority of people believe is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

What about the universal idea of mankind at the time of Galileo as to the obvious fact of the rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west? Was not the earth fixed? Did they not see with their own eyes that the earth was the center of universal life and the sun only a satellite? Did they not *see* the sun rise in the east and set in the west? They knew. And the church at that time proved this universal belief from the Bible. It was too obvious to be discussed. No one doubted, except a hopeless heretic who was made to recant.

Is it possible that in religion people may also be mistaken as to the "Plan of Salvation" being the true, and only true, interpretation of Christianity? This belief involves the idea of Three Divine Beings, "each of whom is by Himself God and Lord," which is obviously a belief in Three Gods, and contrary to the plain statement of Jehovah: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." And it involves other things which shall be discussed in that which follows.

People, and the Church, were mistaken in the time of Galileo as to the origin of day and night. Can it be possible that they are completely mistaken now about their idea of Christianity?

But let us think more about this so-called Plan of Salvation.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The world is filled with books, articles and sermons in defense of the so-called Plan of Salvation. Mankind in general has been so impressed by the arguments for its truth and correctness that it is firmly believed to be identical with Christianity. The Scriptures have been so used and quoted that the Plan of Salvation seems to be their legitimate and only explanation. It would seem to be impossible to disentangle truth from error in this case so that men may see that the religion of Jesus does not teach the Plan of Salvation. It will possibly horrify many people to be told that the Plan of Salvation is an invention of man and did not exist until the time of St. Anselm, 1033 to 1109, an Italian ecclesiastic who became Archbishop of Canterbury in England and was later expelled by the king and later wrote his book which developed the theory involved in the so-called Plan of Salvation. This was in 1098, over a thousand years after the Crucifixion.

St. Anselm's position was that of the Roman influenced by the idea of Law and Justice. The idea of the At-one-ment between God and Man ceased to be thought of as the relationship between a Heavenly Father and His Children and thenceforward became the idea of the relationship between a King and His Subjects. It was thereafter thought of as purely legal and the legalistic idea was profoundly impressed upon Christian teaching, so much so that the idea which the Lord impressed upon mankind in the parable of the Prodigal Son of our Heavenly Father standing with open arms to receive back His children into the haven of His love has been forgotten. In the legalistic idea it was necessary, because of the father's demand, that the elder brother of the prodigal should have come forward and offered himself as an object of punishment. It was necessary that the elder brother should have been duly punished as a substitute for his wayward brother. And as the wages of sin, or of wandering

from the father's home, was death, it was indispensable that the elder brother should have suffered the death penalty.

The Plan of Salvation demanded the death penalty for all sin, whatever it was that was done in violation of God's law. There was no escape. All who sinned after the sin of Adam came under this penalty, not merely Adam. It meant as well that all of his progeny forever would perish. This did not mean merely physical death, but eternal death in hell prepared for the devil and his angels. This meant that the entire human race came under this penalty—innocent little children, infants, as well as all older men and women. God simply had to have His justice satisfied. Law had been broken. There could be no escape. The hideous injustice of such a curse upon the human race was explained as the justice of a Supreme Being who could do whatever He willed, regardless of human ideas of justice. Men began to praise God because of His justice in condemning humanity to eternal death as the offspring of Adam. In the Middle Ages men praised God for the sufferings of little children in hell. A more monstrous idea of the Divine Being could not have been imagined. Moloch, whose priests claimed that the only way to gain the favor of this monster was to place their infants and little children in the extended brazen arms of the idol and then to see the children withdrawn, shrieking with terror, into the burning fiery furnace within the image, was not so cruel. Moloch murdered only a few comparatively; God the human race.

This is the basis of the Plan of Salvation.

The human race was to be saved by the mercy of their Elder Brother, Christ, who would undertake to come to earth after some thousands of years and be murdered, the innocent for the guilty. The idea of the Plan of Salvation was to save mankind by *substitution*—the innocent Son of God for the wicked human race. It involved the murder of Jesus by the Jewish race. If the Jews had not murdered Jesus, there could have been no penalty paid for Adam's sin. A crime had to be committed in order for God to have mercy. He demanded the death penalty. He could not escape from His own dreadful situation.

The suggestion immediately comes to mind, a searching question it is, "What would have happened if the Jews had not murdered Jesus?" Had they accepted Him, as He sought to have them do, He could not have saved them, nor the human race. A crime had to be committed in order to permit God to save humanity. Blood had to be shed, innocent blood had to be shed, a sacrifice commensurate with the extent of the human race; otherwise God, in His Infinite Justice, could not have saved humanity. But even then He did not agree to save them all, only certain ones who would plead that Jesus had died in their place. The rest would perish eternally in the tortures of hell. This is the Plan of Salvation, the idea of an Italian priest whose theory gained universal acceptance. This is still regarded by millions of the human race as identical with Christianity, as the plan of the Bible.

Immediately thousands of good men and women who accept this theory of salvation rise up to condemn a man who would thus enter what is to them as the temple of God and break down their image, their belief, try to discredit what is to them the plain and only teaching of the Sacred Scriptures.

And yet they know in their hearts that if a man will repent and turn from his evil ways, turn to his Heavenly Father, or to the Lord Jesus, which is for Christians, of course, the same, and thereafter live a life of love to God and the neighbor, which Jesus said is the summing up of religion, he will be saved. The whole Bible can be brought forward to support this statement. Just one passage in proof of what has been said: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done shall he live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" What did Jesus say? "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He did not mention the Plan of Salvation.

Is not what is now being said the evident teaching of the Sacred Scriptures?

Where does the Plan of Salvation come in? It is an attempt to explain the life and mission of Jesus, but utterly misrepresenting it, as is evident. Then what is the true explanation of the life and mission of Jesus?

## CHAPTER II

### THE TRUE EXPLANATION OF THE REDEMPTION

There were three great objectives in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in coming to earth, or in what we call the Incarnation, or assumption of the flesh and of our human nature.

The first great objective was *to release mankind from his captivity to the hells*; for mankind had become an almost complete slave to the hells, or to the collective power of evil beings associated in the underworld, depraved men and women who had gone from this earth in their insane and malignant evil.

The means He used was to assume a human nature and a fleshly body from Mary in order to be able to approach the denizens of the underworld. As God is in Himself He is a consuming fire, and, using a material analogy, had He come unveiled before men and devils they would have been consumed more surely than mortals would be consumed by the near approach of the sun of our solar system.

It was indispensable therefore that He should veil over His glory.

It would have been possible for the Lord to have destroyed the enemies of the human race by His Divine Word, the Divine Truth. If "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made," certainly the earth and the hells could have been as easily destroyed.

The illusions of hell are mere phantasies; the power of evil is a phantasy; but men were entangled in those phantasies, believing good to be evil and evil to be good. They were hypnotized by evil beings, and were almost completely in the power of these evil beings. The wickedness of the earth would have quickly destroyed the race under the influence of insane and malignant beings.

It became necessary for the Lord in His assumed humanity to become champion of the human race and fight against the hells as a man, thus to assume the limitations of humanity, but with the power

of Almighty God. There was no other way to meet devils without destroying them. In this way only could He become their rescuer or Redeemer.

The enemy of the human race was the underworld. In this way of human birth, "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head," and the "serpent," or the collective power of evil in its malignity, "would bruise his heel." The seed of the woman was the Divine Truth embodied in a human being, the son of Mary. The seed of the serpent was self-love. Beguiled by the senses, the celestial beings of Eden, set up self-love and the pride of self-intelligence in the center of the Garden instead of the acknowledgment of God, which was the tree of life, as the source of life and happiness.

The promise to the man in Eden of a final rescue became the guiding principle of history. It was the promise of at-one-ment with God which was to be worked out in the history of the world. The story of the Bible is therefore the story of the fall of man by listening to the self-life, in time being brought back to oneness with the Divine through the work of a Human-Divine Redeemer, the seed of the woman.

Into a world almost lost came Jesus, "God-in-Christ," "the Only-Begotten Son of God," bringing the otherwise unseeable and unknowable God into manifestation, so that God could fight against man's enemies of the underworld in this assumed and limited humanity on the plane of man's life.

This was the situation which brought Jesus into the world as the promised Messiah of the Jews, but really as the Deliverer of all mankind from the hells. All the promises of the Old Testament point to this deliverance. And there was to be but one Redeemer and Saviour, the son born of the Virgin, God-with-us, "The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father," God in human form, "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead." As Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . . The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "I and the Father are one."

## CHAPTER III

### GOD REVEALED IN JESUS

The *second* great objective of the coming of the Lord into human life through the assumption of a human form on the plane of nature was *to reveal God to man*. God as He is in Himself is invisible. He dwells on a higher plane, indeed the highest plane of being, on the plane of Infinity and Eternity. As Paul said, "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." Being Infinite He cannot be understood or conceived of by finite beings; for we can understand and conceive of an Infinite Being only by thinking of Him as being out of our bounds of thinking. We can think of anything only on the plane of finiteness, in defined terms or conditions, which bring a thing to us as an object of thought. The word "finite" means limited or bounded. We cannot conceive of the infinity of space, to our minds it must end somewhere. We cannot conceive of the phrase "from eternity" because we cannot conceive of anything not having had a beginning. Thus we cannot think of God either in His infinity or eternity. He must reveal Himself to us, and the only way in which He can do so is by coming into defined conditions, or into objective form. We may in our blindness deny that such a Being can exist but we cannot rationally deny Him as First Cause and as the Preserver of creation who must have made the laws of the universe and who needs must operate them.

God tried in Old Testament times to reveal Himself through the mediation of angels, who are good men and women gone out of this life, or through the prophets who are the recipients of the Divine influx, but the time came when man became too gross and materialistic to be able to receive Divine enlightenment from within. God had to become objective, an object of thought. God could reveal Himself only in human terms. And it was natural that He should so reveal

Himself, for He is Primal Man in whose image and likeness we are made. He therefore assumed humanity through Mary, a virgin, in order that He might be uninfluenced and unaffected by the limitations which come through a human father in order that He might be in a true sense "The Only Begotten Son of God." God thus projected Himself into human life through the assumption of a limited human form on the plane of earth in order not only that He might rescue mankind, but also that He might return into the Infinite later without finite limitations from a human father, and henceforward be the Infinite God. Therefore it was expedient that He should go away from the maternal human and ascend to the Father, again become identical with the Father. His disciples could not understand this, but He said to them: "The time cometh when I shall show you plainly of the Father." That time has come in this New Age when he does reveal Himself as the Father, "The Almighty," as "King of kings and Lord of lords," "God over all blessed forever."

The *third* great objective of the Lord in the incarnation was *to provide an eternal means of contact with mankind*, to provide, as it were, a great dynamo, a Divine Dynamo, which would forever make the otherwise invisible God accessible to man. Just as the electric dynamo makes the otherwise invisible and unknowable force called electricity available for man's needs, giving man its heat, light and energy for his uses, so Jesus, as God come forth to view, brings to man, who can thus conceive of God in human terms, the Divine Heat, (or Love); the Divine Light, (or Truth); and the Divine Energy, (the Power of God). We can thus approach God in His Divine Human, conceive of Him as an object of thought, secure His Love, Truth and Power. As Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go unto the Father." At another time Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him who sent me." The Lord tells us of this relationship in a living way in the parable of the Vine and the branches.

The Son of God who is said to have been set down on the right hand of God after His resurrection was the Divine Human, or the

Glorified Human, the Human made Divine, which remains forever the medium of understanding and contact through which God works on earth. It was not a separate Personality, but an *Aspect* of God after He had come forth to view before the sight of humanity. It was the only Aspect of Divinity that enables us to understand God and come into contact with God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

There are in our thought always, and must forever be, *two* Aspects of God, God as He is in Himself and God in His Coming-Forth-to-View, "God and His Christ." We read in Revelation, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and *He* shall reign forever and ever." "He," not "they." One God in two aspects of the Invisible and the Visible; not unlike man as to soul and body. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man," as Jesus, "and He will dwell with them," as Jesus, "and they shall be his people, and *God Himself shall be with them*, their God.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INCARNATION EXPLAINED

Let us keep in mind that "God was in Christ," and that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity in bodily form," and that Christ was "God over all, blessed forever." That being so there was only one God, but in two aspects, God in Himself and God in His coming forth to view. "No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath brought him forth to view." They were not two distinct persons, even though spoken of as Father and Son, but Jesus was the projection of the Father into time and space for the purpose of rescuing humanity from the grasp of hell. God projects Himself. The son born of Mary, "the Son of Man," was a self-imposed limitation in order to enable God to face men and devils—the only possible way—in order to meet men and devils on their own plane of manifestation without destroying them, to reveal God to man and overcome the underworld *through temptation combats*. Jehovah was the unseen God; Jesus was Jehovah come forth to view as Saviour; not two, but one. Hear, O Israel, the Lord, thy God is One." Jehovah said, "My glory will I not give to another," and also, "I, Jehovah, am thy Redeemer and thy Saviour." The name Jesus means Jehovah as Saviour.

Let us remember two things; there never was a Son of God in the beginning more merciful than the Father, and it is incredible that God could not forgive men without the shedding of blood. A king can forgive his rebellious subjects. *Why cannot God do so?* Our heavenly Father would not want His children to be destroyed in hell even if they deserved it. Certainly no earthly parent would desire it, nor permit it. The eternal Decrees of God making it necessary to vindicate Divine Justice by the murder of humanity, or else the murder of the Son of God, are an absurdity.

The early Christian Church understood that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was not to appease Divine wrath or Divine justice, as the church later came to believe, but the work of the hells in fighting God. The ransom paid was to the hells. How was this possible?

Because hell had taken possession of the human race through the overthrow of man's free will. It was necessary for God to fight the hells. How could He do so? By assuming man's nature and form, as we have seen, in order that He might approach them without destroying them. It meant that God would have to identify Himself with humanity by taking upon Himself man's nature, subject to temptation, and that hell would have the power it had acquired through the ruin of man to make men suffer. Was there no other way? Jesus in His struggle in Bethsemane evidently asked the question, but He then saw that the only way was by submitting to the hells. "Not my will,"—not the human will,—not the will of the son of Mary,—"but thy will be done," the will of the Divine Love which would not destroy the hells by violence.

God identified Himself with the human race in His coming forth to view as Jesus. He had to be born of a virgin so as not to have a human father with resulting limitations when He should return to His full Deity. No man with a human father could ever be God. The Son had to be "the Only Begotten," unique in being merely the channel for God to enter the human race. He had to have the human nature and the body of flesh in order to be visible, tangible, directly in touch with humanity. He was absolutely different from all other men in having no limiting inheritance from a human father. *But He took full possession of the planes of human life on earth and in heaven by becoming incarnate and made them forever His own by His victories over the hells who had invaded them.* He thus provided an eternal basis on the planes of human life on earth and in heaven *so that He could be fully present in them forever.* He is truly now "Immanuel, God-with-us." He is "the tabernacle of God with men." He dwells with us now in His Divine Human, or human made Divine. We are His people, and God Himself is with us now, our God. He is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." And we can never see any other God than the God we see in Jesus. As finite beings we have to see God in finiteness or not at all. As we cannot see the soul of another man except in his body, so we cannot see the Divine Soul except as made visible in Jesus. This is the plain teaching of the Bible.

## CHAPTER V

### GOD DECLARES SUBSTITUTION IMPOSSIBLE

When the Israelites under Moses came out of Egypt they were obviously merely a race of slaves, without culture or education or knowledge of a cultural kind. They had been kept in the most abject slavery. How could God reveal Himself to them? Only by talking to them in language they could understand. They were primitive in their feelings, totally unspiritual. The revelations that came to them through Moses had to picture God in the terms of a man such as they could respect, capable of anger and revenge. Therefore God was presented to them then, and in later writings of the Old Testament, as one who took vengeance of their inventions. The law proclaimed from Mt. Sinai was given in a tempest of flame and thunder in order properly to impress a savage race.

But the basis of the covenant which God made with them through Moses was the Ten Commandments. If they kept the Ten Commandments, they would be prospered and happy. If they did not, the curses outlined in Deuteronomy would fall on them and their children. A tabernacle was built expressly under the direction of Moses to provide a holy place for the Ten Commandments. God said He would dwell with them there. It was a picturization of the fact that God would dwell with them as they kept the Ten Commandments. Let us keep in mind that Israel agreed to keep the Ten Commandments *and that was the basis of the covenant.*

But they kept the Commandments no better than we do. They had to have something external in the way of worship to satisfy the savage love of the spectacular, something to appeal to man's love of the sensuous. Their father Abraham had worshipped God back in Ur of the Chaldees by means of animal sacrifices. He kept it up when he came into Canaan. He had also been an idolater, but he was called upon to worship One God in the new land into which he came; yet it was not possible for him to have the true

name of the Lord as Jehovah revealed to him. He was still too external despite his high quality of implicit obedience. Abraham's descendants still kept up the worship of God by animal sacrifices. It was a heathenish custom expressing the idea of reconciliation with God by shedding blood. It too often resulted in the shedding of human blood as expiation for offenses to Deity, under the superstitious belief that Deity could be pacified, appeased only by the vicarious yielding up of precious life. As we read of those ancient peoples trying to appease Deity in this way we have a deep pity for their grossly superstitious idea of what God requires of His children. Surely we have gone far beyond any such superstitious idea of God. Or have we?

Through Moses God gave the children of Israel many laws regarding health and sanitation and social relationships, but, in order to keep them from worshipping heathen idols, like those of Egypt and neighboring lands, and reverting to gross idolatry. He permitted them to have a worship through animal sacrifice; but, mark this, He utterly changed the spirit of it, making the animals to represent the offering up of their good affections, for animal life represents the emotional life of man, and making the meal offerings from the vegetable kingdom to represent their good thoughts; for the vegetable kingdom represents the intellectual life of man. In this way worship through sacrifices was made possible, possible to a savage people unable to appreciate true ethical ideals. Their plural wives and easy divorce and spirit of revenge show how external they really were. They had the spirit of a savage race, but were held to some degree in check by Divine law.

To them God had to reveal Himself in the best way possible, but their spirit was not greatly changed even after they came into the land of Israel. They did each man that which was right in his own eyes and worshipped the gods of the land. However, we perceive that as the centuries passed by the mark of a faithful Israelite was the performance of worship through animal sacrifice. Yet Christian worship has gone little further. While animal sacrifices were abolished for Christians following the founding of the Christian Church, the spirit of it was continued. The writers of the New Testament

having been brought up in the remembrance of the worship of God through animal sacrifice *tried to interpret the work of Christ wholly in the spirit of such worship.* Paul especially dedicates himself to the task of explaining the work of Jesus in the language of mysticism, of Hebrew mysticism, based on the significance of the sacrificial system, which was, as we have shown, *not* the real basis of Old Testament religion, but a system permitted by the Lord because of the external nature of the people. And yet Paul caught the true idea when he said: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." That being true God did not have to be propitiated. It was man who had to be reconciled to God.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DEATH ON CALVARY

The rejection of Jesus by the Jews was a representation of their rejection of the Word of God and of the Divine Being. It is perfectly true that God in Jesus completely identified Himself in His assumed humanity with the human race, taking upon Himself tendencies to sin through his human inheritance, and also bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and bore our sinful tendencies in his own body on the tree; but he did not suffer as a substitute for us, nor pay the penalty of our sins. His death on the cross represented the rejection of the Divine Being and His Word by the Jewish nation. Jesus was the Word incarnate. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." There was no God in heaven demanding the death of the sinner but willing to be appeased by the death of His son. Jesus was God in the flesh come to earth in a limited humanity in order to share with us our life and overcome our enemies of the underworld and set us free from their ruthless power. He poured out His life for us in that fierce combat against the hells. They had power because the human race had yielded to their suggestions of evil. He died to release humanity from their grasp by overcoming the hells as they tempted Him. And He overcame.

He became sin for us representatively, not actually, for He knew no sin. He did not assume our guilt, for He was a representation of the Divine Innocence, representatively the Lamb of God who bore the sinful tendencies of humanity, but not its sin. There was no other God to appease, for God is one, one in Essence and one in Person,—manifested in the flesh. He that saw Jesus saw the Father as one seeing you sees your soul manifesting itself through your body.

But it was not God that died upon the cross, but the son of Mary, the assumed human. God cannot die. Because we are God's children we cannot die, but our bodies can,—our carnal nature can. He

assumed our humanity in order to share our life, in order to meet the hells and overcome in the limitations of that human nature, in order to reveal Himself to us in the only way possible. "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." He suffered vicariously for us, but did not become a substitute for us, because there is no such thing in human life or in God's universe as one person becoming guilty for another and suffering for him, substituting for him when it is known that he is not guilty. No court of law would permit it, nor would God do so. In fact, He says expressly in Ezekiel; "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done shall he live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live?"

This means definitely and unmistakably and forever that God will not punish the innocent for the guilty, any more than a human court of law will do so, and that if we turn away from our evils of life, and live according to Divine law, we shall be saved. Each man is responsible for his own character. Jesus confirmed this in *Revelation* by saying, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be," thus according to his character. No one can be our substitute in acquiring an education or a Christian character. There is no magical process in either. Each means prolonged effort.

## CHAPTER VII

### GOD'S REJECTION OF THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

Did God reject the sacrificial system which He permitted the Israelites to establish? Yes, by showing that He did not care for animal sacrifices, but wanted His children to realize such sacrifices were only symbols of true spiritual worship and superseded by sincere spiritual living. Take as an example the 51st Psalm where David expresses contrition for the sins of adultery and murder. He had a glimpse then of something infinitely higher than symbolism, of the spiritual reality behind the symbolism. We read: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." No. God did not desire animal sacrifices, and did not delight in burnt offering.

We have this brought out powerfully by the prophet Isaiah. Through Isaiah the Lord tried to make His people understand the emptiness of their ritual practices, yes, His utter rejection of sacrificial worship. We read in Isaiah 1:11: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?"

The offering of animal sacrifices is revolting in itself, obviously from a heathen origin, even if permitted to the Israelites, because of their degraded spiritual state. We ought to be able to realize that if bloody sacrifices would overwhelm us with disgust and horror if offered to appease us, they would certainly be as offensive to God, permitted only because of the Lord's effort to make them help in lifting the thought of the worshipper to spiritual cleansing and sacrifice. We can see in the fact that He permitted this heathenish practice His infinite patience and desire to help pitifully crude

humanity, people who could understand only the debased and cruel.

The Lord through Isaiah tells His people that outward worship cannot take the place of obedience to His commandments. Sacrifices and ritual can never be a substitute for spiritual living. The Lord states the case frankly to a people who ought to know better: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." Why? Because "your hands are full of blood." In other words, because of their evil living.

And yet the Christian world is taught that the bloody sacrifice,—yes, the murder of the innocent Son of God, will appease the Almighty and be a substitute for living well! This is what is involved in the so-called Plan of Salvation.

The Lord through Isaiah insists that His children shall live well, and who can question that this is the message of the Lord throughout the Bible? Did not Jesus say, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them?" Under the Plan of Salvation people have been told that they could not do anything that is good; all of their effort is as "filthy rags," dyed with self-merit. Then they are told that Jesus kept the Ten Commandments for us, in our place, as our substitute, that all we have to do is to "believe" that Jesus died as our substitute, that He bore the penalty of our sins and offers us a free pardon and an abundant entrance into heaven without any effort on our part, since we can do nothing whatever that is good.

A preacher once said to the writer, pointing to the Ten Commandments hanging on the wall before us: "They are an offence to me. Jesus kept them for me. I don't want to have anything to do with them." "But," I asked, "what about the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord tells us that they are to be kept not only in the letter but in the spirit? The Sermon on the Mount might be said to be a summing up of the Christian religion." "No," he answered angrily, "It belongs to the Old Testament religion. I am saved by grace and not by the works of the law. Jesus died on the cross as my substitute. He paid the penalty of my sins. All I have to do is to believe it."

In other words, he and others like him, reject the message of

the Lord to His children: "Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." And Jesus says in Revelation: "Blessed are they that *do* his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHY CHRISTIANITY FAILS

Is it any wonder that Christianity taught after this manner has failed to save the world from its evils? Jesus tells us that when we see the Abomination which makes desolate standing in the Holy Place,—and what other belief equals this in making desolate the Christian life, denying the possibility of our living well and crouching under the substitution of the innocent for the guilty,—we should flee to the mountains. The holding of such a desolating belief marks the end of the First Christian Age. A New Age is indispensable to bring us back to the true teachings of Jesus.

When Christians sing: "Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain; He washed it white as snow;" they forget that the Lord says that the return to the Lord, the shunning of our evils of life, and the keeping of His commandments, is the thing that saves us. It is precisely this changed life, *lived in the strength of the Lord*, which is said to wash away our sins. The Lord points out that if we do these indispensable things of repentance and living well, "though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Mark it well: *It is not our belief in the Plan of Salvation which accomplishes this end*, but repentance and reform.

It is perfectly true that we are saved by faith in the Son of God, but that means that we are saved as we come into the realization or perception of Jesus as God come forth to view, and accept His help to live the Christ-like life, thus are saved by our co-operation,—our free choice of the good and the rejection of the evil,—which means our coming into the new life of God in the soul. That is the faith in the Son of God. We are not as sticks and stones, unable to choose the good and reject the evil; else the invitation would not be given us, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The "works of the law" which do not save are the acts of ritual-

ism and piety done in our own strength tainted by selfish ends. In the Jewish dispensation they were the performance of the rituals of the ceremonial law, not the eternal basis of the Ten Commandments, which are forever necessary. "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he is that loveth me."

But that the Lord rejected the sacrificial system as anything but a symbolism of true religion is conclusively shown by the following passage from Micah 6th chapter: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Can we imagine a more complete repudiation of the efficacy of the sacrificial system to save mankind. Even if Jewish symbolists tried to interpret the Christian religion in its terms, does it not show rather their inability to grasp the fact of the changed life as the true religion of Jesus?

## CHAPTER IX

### HOW SHALL WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

The Bible seems easy to understand but actually it is the most misunderstood book in the world. It is interpreted by different individuals and sects in a thousand different ways, and this is the chief cause of the existence of so many different denominations of Christians.

One reason that it is so misunderstood is that individuals come to it with certain definite theories which they wish to confirm from it. Let us say that it is true that they derive those theories from their cursory reading of the Bible, but they emphasize some one point or other, or various points which they unite into a system of belief, and then insist that what they have derived and emphasized is the true and only belief from the Bible and hence the true religion, and everything which is contrary to their view is heresy. They then teach their view, or interpretation, to others about them, and confirm what they teach from the passages which they think prove the completeness of their new phase of religion. Since most people do no clear thinking for themselves, they are open to an emphasis taught them by others of an ardent spirit. They see, or think they see, from the Bible itself the correctness of the view which has been presented. Every passage which appears to be contrary to their interpretation is made to harmonize as far as possible with the system of belief adopted, or at least is twisted into an appearance of harmony, or else cast aside as unimportant. St. Anselm evidently approached the Bible with a theory of his own from his reading, but his effort resulted in a total failure to understand its message,—in the eventual destruction of the Christian Church.

The method suggested of approaching the Bible with a theory of our own, and attempting to prove it by passages of the Word, is a most unfair way of getting at the truth of the Bible and it always results in an unfair presentation of its truths. There is probably

enough truth in a new system so derived to prevent a total destruction of the individual. He is probably taught to be good and to do good and in such a simple way that he feels somehow the presence of God in his life. But we simply cannot go to the Bible or any other book with preconceived theories and hope to arrive at a true interpretation of it.

What is the true method? It is to take certain fundamental ideas presented in the Bible concerning the nature of God and the purposes or objectives He has in dealing with men and try to get at its basic teachings. When the lawyer asked Jesus which was the great, or greatest, teaching of the Old Testament, Jesus told him that the worship of one God and love to Him and the neighbor were the two great commandments of religion and that all the Law and the Prophets hung upon those cardinal or fundamental teachings of religion,—love to God and love towards our fellowman. It is true that no branch of the Christian Church gives this same emphasis in its practical teaching, even though all do so nominally. Instead they emphasize their doctrines which separate them from others. Therefore we see why all of them have failed in saving the world. But, at least, it is evident that we know now how to begin a true interpretation of the Bible. Anything which arises in our further interpretation which is not in harmony with the acknowledgment of God as One, One Being, and in a life of keeping God's commandments, summed up in the Ten Commandments, or the Two Great Commandments—our truest way of showing our love to God and our fellow man—the *only* way acceptable to God—is to be cast aside.

Taking this simple method of understanding the Bible we see at once that any doctrine taught by any church which shows that God is cruel and unjust, more cruel and unjust than any man of ordinary sensibilities, is untrue. Take the Plan of Salvation as an example. All people will acknowledge that the parable of the Prodigal Son is a true and obviously true statement of the attitude of God towards His erring children. It was not true that the Prodigal's father was angry with his son, wholly alienated from him. His love went out ceaselessly to have him see the error and evil of his life and to return to his father's home. It is a perfect picture of the

attitude of God towards the human race. Who will deny it? Then when we read that "God is angry with the wicked every day?" what are we to think? Does it not obviously mean that from the viewpoint of the wicked the Lord is angry with him, just as the evildoer thinks of the police and law courts as hostile to him,—or, let us say, as *angry* with him? For a people who were idolaters and immersed in evil living, as were the people to whom the Old Testament came, who persisted in their evil living, as is witnessed by the denunciations of the Prophets against them, it is evident that God did seem to be angry with them; and with those who were trying to live decent lives when they saw what happened to the wicked it did appear that the Lord was angry with the wicked. They did not realize that evil punishes itself, and that God's attitude is forever that of the father of the Prodigal Son.

In both Old and New Testament good-intentioned people, as well as the wicked, assumed that God was like themselves in anger, hatred and revenge, and God allowed them so to think of Him because of the need to try to maintain among them a semblance of order. They could not easily comprehend that the Lord's statement through Jeremiah was always true, namely, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." This means that the Lord was always loving, always patient, always striving to save mankind from destruction. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, the Lord says very definitely, and conclusively, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Is it not evident that God is not like a man to give way to anger, hatred and revenge. Thus when we read that "God is angry with the wicked every day," we realize at once that this is only an appearance and not the real fact.

But writers in both the Old and New Testament yielded to the appearance and believed God to be an avenger, ready, and eager to punish evildoers, and even constructed hell to be an appropriate place to punish them eternally. They were quite ready to accept the attitude of the heathen world and believe that God needed to be propitiated and appeased, ready to believe that sin must somehow be expiated, that since "the wages of sin is death," death must

be the penalty of all who disobey the Divine law, and proper expiation must be made in order to escape the penalty of evildoing. The only way they thought of to appease God was by an atonement, or expiation, of their sin,—an atonement, or expiation, which would show their great sorrow for their evil. This led not only to animal sacrifices, where animals poured out their life's blood to pacify Deity, but to the hideous sacrifice of sons and daughters.

This idea was carried over into the New Testament, and despite the eternally true picture provided in the parable of the Prodigal Son, they felt it necessary to change the thought about God's attitude from that of a loving Father ever standing ready to receive back the penitent sinner to that of an autocratic and merciless Ruler, or Sovereign, who demanded the death penalty for every sinner, even of innocent little infants because they were the offspring of Adam. This is the change effected in the Christian religion as received by mankind by the work of such men as St. Anselm. And it is hinted at by writers of the New Testament who seemed to have forgotten the attitude of Jesus who said, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," and "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

After St. Anselm his interpretations were accepted by the Roman Church and later in the Reformation started by Luther by the Protestant Church. This hideous misunderstanding of the nature of the God of the Bible, this fantastic and inhuman idea of His cruelty, became part of the Christian religion and people have been persecuted ever since, or at least called heretics, who did not believe it.

## CHAPTER X

### THE TRUE METHOD ILLUSTRATED

The question as to how we shall interpret the Bible is solved by taking the book as a whole and thinking of the true and evident nature of God as infinitely and eternally loving, incapable of the weaknesses of hating humanity, and avenging Himself upon them. It seems true to say that God hates sin, but loves the sinner; that his hatred of sin is not because of His fastidious dislike of what is offensive to Him as an individual being, but because of its harmful effect upon the sinner. The God the theologians have invented is a base calumny, an atrocious misrepresentation of a Deity who actually is forever like the father of the Prodigal Son. The real God of the Bible is a Divine Being whose love followed the sinner down into hell itself and overthrew the hells in order to release mankind from the illusions of wickedness and from spiritual death. God is not at all like the God behind the so-called Plan of Salvation. God, manifested in Jesus, did actually come forth into the lowest planes of man's earthly life, and in the inner world of spirit met and fought against and overcame man's deadly enemies, rescuing man from their cruel and malignant power, setting him forever in a place of equilibrium, or balance, between hell and heaven, so that aided by the Lord and His angels, man could freely choose the good and reject the evil. This was the Rescue of mankind, His Redemption; and Salvation is man's choice of the good and rejection of the evil helped by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who is God dwelling with man. Is not this latter Plan of Salvation, if one wishes to call it that, in harmony with the true nature of God as revealed in Old and New Testament?

Is not this the picture of Redemption and Salvation disclosed in the 40th chapter of Isaiah? For example, we have there the picture of John the Baptist as the forerunner of the Messiah who was to prepare the way of Jehovah. Mind you, he was to prepare the way

of Him who was *Jehovah* in the flesh, and in that way *Jehovah Himself*, of Him in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. John was to make in the desert a "highway for *our God*." That this was so is shown by the statements which follow where it is told us that "the glory of *Jehovah* shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." And this coming forth was Jesus—God in the flesh.

And the church revealed respectively as Zion and Jerusalem is commanded to lift up the voice with strength and say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold, your God." It is not the Suffering Servant spoken of in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, but the triumphant, *All-Powerful God of heaven, the Creator of all things*, who is to be seen in Jesus. "Behold, the Lord God (*Jehovah*) will come with strong hand, and *his arm*—" Jesus in the flesh, seen by the Jews as the Suffering Servant, but seen thus because He took our nature upon Him and fought for us against the hells and was therefore misunderstood,— "His arm, "*Jehovah in the flesh*, "shall rule for him."

That this picture of Jehovah coming forth for the rescue of mankind from the hells is the revelation of Jesus is shown by the verse which follows: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd here pictured, "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Yes, He laid down His human life derived from Mary,—not His Godhead,—and so doing He was able to say: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all,—" the Divine Love,—"is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are *one*."

Thus he gained the victory for universal mankind, gained for them the power to choose the good and reject the evil. He did not make a propitiation to an angry God up in heaven. The word in the Bible translated "propitiation" means "mercy-seat". There was no God apart from Him, for He was Jehovah come forth to view.

There was no other Deity, for God is one and indivisible,—no other Deity demanding the death of the innocent for the guilty. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,—" became the "mercy-seat". God projected Himself into the world by the assumption of a human nature to face and fight against the enemies of the human race,—became the "mercy-seat" to make God's mercy ever present—but God was not divided into two equal Deities, for God is One being, and indivisible, One God did not accept the death of another God, for God is *ONE*. His own Arm brought the eternal rescue of mankind and made possible man's salvation. Jesus said plainly, "I lay down my life for the sheep . . . I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." He did not lay down His life—His human life—because of God's demand to have a bloody sacrifice to satisfy His wrath ~~on~~ His sense of justice, to pay the penalty of man's sins, but to save mankind personally from man's enemies of the underworld by fighting against them in His assumed human and delivering mankind from hopeless subjection to the hells. "In all their affliction he was afflicted—. . . in his love and in his pity he redeemed them."

And yet we hear over the radio daily, and from a thousand pulpits, that people are saved only by "the shed blood of Christ," and that men cannot possibly do anything that is good which contributes to salvation. But still people are urged to repent and be baptized and to surrender their lives to God *as indispensable to salvation*, as if everything depended upon turning away from evil and living as a Christian. It would seem as if there were complete contradiction in these statements.

Let us examine what is meant that we are saved only "by the blood."

## CHAPTER XI

### "SAVED BY THE BLOOD"

There are three ways advanced by the "Plan of Salvation" people as to the application and value of the blood.

People claim to be "under the blood," referring to the placing of the blood of the Passover lamb on the lintels of the doorposts of the Israelites to protect them from the Angel of Death who was to pass over Egypt and destroy all the firstborn of the land. The Passover lamb is thought of as a type of Jesus who was slain at Passover time and whose blood is believed to be placed mystically over the households of believers to protect individuals and families from disaster. There are Christian songs dedicated to this idea of being "Under the Blood." In these songs the idea is extended to cover the protection of those who accept the Vicarious Atonement.

Another idea of the value and use of the blood of Jesus is called being *washed in the blood*. In Revelation 1:5 we read: "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." We shall consider that statement in its place.

The third idea is the familiar one that Jesus vicariously died upon the cross, the innocent for the guilty, thus shedding His blood, in order that God might be able to forgive mankind the penalty of their sins, which penalty is death. Jesus, they say, voluntarily submitted Himself to this ignominious and cruel death upon the cross in order to *expiate* our sins, thereby making it possible for those who *accept Him as a substitute* to be admitted into heaven. In this way, it is claimed, they are admitted into heaven, and in this way only; for, as we have previously observed, this vicarious death does not save the rest of mankind who have never heard of Jesus and His atoning death, and certainly not those who reject this offer of mercy. Under this Plan of Salvation God simply cannot exempt any from eternal death in hell who do not accept this dogma. It is only a partial escape of the human race from eternal death,

an escape of the relatively few. Under this idea the important thing is to have our sins forgiven,—wiped out, obliterated. But then,—accepting this pardon—a magical process takes place,—the forgiven who have received a free pardon, are miraculously changed from wolves to lambs, or from evil, sinning people, into saints, for nothing that they can do contributes an iota to their salvation. Is it any wonder that the people of the earth who have accepted this Plan of Salvation have not become actual saints upon earth, but that those who are nominally Christian under this plan, having no need to keep the Ten Commandments themselves since Jesus kept them for them, *have persisted in greed, lust, hatred and every other wickedness?* Is it any wonder that wars continue and the exploitation and slavery of mankind by nominally Christian nations? And sometimes by nominally Christian individuals as leaders of industry? Is the "changed life" made the goal for those who attend churches? Why should people "change" their habits of living when nothing depends upon it?

As to being "under the blood," as outlined above, it scarcely seems worth while to discuss it, except to say that people who do accept the idea are sticklers for the literal sense of the Bible and yet accept a mystical idea of salvation by a symbol only. If one realizes that the blood of the Passover lamb was a type of the blood of Jesus, and the blood of Jesus is thought of as the *Divine truth* itself, which *when applied as truth to daily living* preserves one from the assaults of evil being, and saves from spiritual death, the idea is good. We should all want to be under the Divine protection by keeping the Divine commandments. That is to be "under the blood," under the protection of Divine truth lived out day by day.

As to the idea of being "washed in the blood," the same idea of applying Divine truth in daily living makes the mystical statement a vivid reality. If I refrain from stealing because it is Divinely prohibited, I am truly washing or cleansing myself from the sin of theft. That is a practical way of being made free from sin.

But the "Plan of Salvation" people think that such a practical course is not Biblical, that somehow the blood of Jesus is literally

applied by using the word "blood" instead of its spiritual equivalent of Divine truth.

A preacher called one day upon the writer to find out just what I did believe about salvation. He stayed two hours and a half and I explained simply my beliefs and felt that he had been impressed by the reasonableness of what I said and its strict adherence to Scripture. He told me of his experiences in finding his present religion and I found him to be apparently a very sincere Christian. Again he came to see me in the evening and stayed three hours, bringing with him a long letter of three closely typed legal size sheets filled with quotations from the Bible emphasizing the use of the word "blood." He had evidently spent the entire afternoon following his first visit writing the letter to convince me that I had gone astray.

I told him that if he would only think of what the word "blood" signified, namely, the Divine truth, and since the Divine truth is the expression of the Divine Life, and hence may be thought of as Divine Life itself, for "the life is in the blood," he would have a clearer understanding of the passages he quoted. I showed him that a soldier is said to have shed his blood for his country when it was meant that he had poured out his life for it, that we should think of the reality of the life of Jesus in our souls as saving us rather than hold on to the symbol of the blood. When Jesus died on the cross, shedding His blood for us, it evidently meant that He poured out His life for us in His temptation combats against the hells as our champion. We are saved by His life as it finds expression in our life.

He seemed to agree with me, but the next morning he came again and urged me to give up human interpretation of the Bible, saying that I should accept the Bible as it is. I told him that there are almost as many interpretations of the Bible text as there are men. And he handed me, strangely inconsistent, a diagram which showed that there are seven steps in man's salvation based upon the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, an obviously new and man-made interpretation of Bible symbols. He wanted me to accept *his* interpretation of the Bible! I told him that I believed in *reality* and he merely in the symbol. He admitted that the "blood" did signify the life but insisted

that it was wrong to say so. Then he grew angry and said to me, "You listen to me. Don't you talk." My wife interposed and asked him, "Why do you take away my husband's liberty? Has he no right to express his views as well as you?" "No," he said, "I want him to listen to me. I believe in the blood. That's what the Bible talks about, the blood, the blood." He spoke like a man obsessed. I said, "What do you think about when you use the word 'blood'? Does it convey no idea to your mind?" "Never mind," he cried, "I believe in the blood. I don't want to think about it." I said to him, "Frankly, my brother, I believe you will be saved, because from our previous conversations you appear to be a spiritually-minded man, but you will be saved only because you have the truth and the *life* of Jesus in your soul." But he went away muttering, "It's the blood, the blood."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FAILURE OF LITERALISTS

Is this incident not an illustration of those people who reject every attempt to understand the spiritual meaning of the Bible and lose themselves in symbolism? Following such a method they can make the Bible mean anything their fancy suggests. They live in symbols and imagine themselves to be realists only. The people of the First Christian Age seem to have become largely materialists in holding on to symbols as if there were no meaning behind the symbols, as did my visitor. They speak of being washed in the blood as if it were literally applied. They sing of it in their hymns. A woman once said to me, "Perhaps you know how to argue, but I believe 'There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains!'" I replied, "You object to my spiritual interpretation of the Bible, yet how much blood do you think was shed by Jesus at the cross? Was there enough to fill a fountain? You know at once there was not. You know perfectly well that there never was 'a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins.' You know perfectly well that in the whole history of the world there never was a sinner plunged 'beneath that flood,' to 'lose his guilty stains.' You realize as I speak that the song you love is only a simile. You realize that the truth which flowed from Jesus is as a fountain in which men may bathe,—as they obey that truth, and they are cleansed from their sins as they obey."

But let us look more closely into this idea of the blood. That it is used symbolically is clearly shown when Jesus commands His disciples to eat His flesh and drink His blood. He used symbols to show them how to do this in the bread and the cup. The bread was not His flesh. The cup was not His blood. No one ever ate literally the flesh and drank the blood of Jesus. The Roman church tries to make its adherents fancy that they are actually eating the flesh of Jesus when

they eat the little wafer handed them, but no one can sensibly believe that this is true, even though the priest claims it. Jesus claimed that He is the Bread of Life, and that we must eat Him. How do we do this? By partaking of His life. How do we partake of His life? By receiving his love in our hearts so that it becomes our life. The same is true of His blood. As we partake of His truth, we are enlightened and vivified by it.

The entire Bible is written in symbols. The blood is mentioned so often and made use of because of its intimate connection with human life. It is true that the life is in the blood, of a man as well as of an animal. The writer of the Book of Hebrews says plainly, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Those sacrifices were only a symbolism, as he says. And the writer of Hebrews is likewise speaking wholly in symbols, after the manner of the Hebrew symbolists of his time. The blood of Christ offered without spot to God is only a symbolism, and it means the *life* of Jesus which is "to purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The life is in the blood. The blood is, as it were, a corporeal *soul*, and *represents* the spiritual life. The blood poured out for us on Calvary represents the life He poured out for humanity, the life of the maternal human, and it was truly a sacrifice,—not to another God, for God is One, but a willing sacrifice on His part incurred in His rescuing man from his enemies of the underworld.

The writer of Hebrews also says that "almost all things are by the law purged with blood." This blood *represents* the Divine truth and life which flow out from the Lord since His victory over the hells. In the ancient sacrifices it *represents* the blood of Jesus; but it became a *living power* as His life—the reality it represented—to purify and cleanse and make alive after the completion of His combats with the hells on Calvary.

A favorite quotation of the "Plan of Salvation" people is the verse in Hebrews which says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." But what does it mean? That without the suffering of Jesus on the cross as the innocent victim, the shedding of His blood, we cannot expect the forgiveness of God for our sins? It is an interesting illus-

tration of the method of interpreting the Bible upon the basis of a preconceived idea so as to make it to confirm our preconceived idea. The theory to be proved is that the Plan of Salvation is true.

Let us see what the shedding of blood *really* means? Obviously the pouring out of the life. In the case of the Jewish sacrifices, and of the sacrifice of Jesus, it was *representative* of the pouring out of the life of Jesus by *means of which it was possible for Jesus to make effective His victory over the hells*. By that victory He was conqueror and by that victory He makes us to be conquerors through His domination of the hells. Sins are remitted only as we repent of them, shun them as of hell, "cease to do evil, learn to do well." Jesus said to the Jews, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." *Repentance is therefore indispensable in order to secure forgiveness of sins.* But the *power* to overcome our sinful tendencies results from the shedding of blood by Jesus.—*by His life poured out which secures for us the spiritual victory.* Our sins are not remitted by the mere shedding of blood, but by the *victory* of Jesus enabling us to *live* His kind of Life.

When Jesus said at the Last Supper to His disciples, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you," just what did he mean? The cup was not His blood, nor were its contents. He was speaking in symbols. Did He not mean, This cup, representing or *symbolizing* my blood, *represents* my life which is now poured out to enable you to keep my new covenant with you?" The Old Covenant was the Ten Commandments which men failed to keep because they were external men and tried to keep these commandments as external men *in their own strength*. Now Jesus had come into the world and had conquered the hells and was thenceforth to give men power to keep them *by His personal presence with them in His truth*. His new covenant with men was His promise to be with them and give them a perpetual victory as they lived His truth. The cup represented that truth of victory which if they drank they would have eternal life. What warrant is there in believing it meant the ideas of the Plan of Salvation? Why read into every passage of Scripture a confirmation of that doctrine which has taken away from men the sense of need to keep the Lord's commandments and by destroying that sense of need, destroyed the effectiveness of Christianity in

actually changing men? Let us fancy men saying, "Why change our lives when we have no need, when salvation is a free gift simply by believing a dogma, when all we can do is only evil and has no effect in saving us?" The "consummation of the age" has come because of this false teaching of Faith Alone. It is truly the Abomination of Desolation set up in the Holy Place, or God's dwelling place with man, destroying true religion.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE GREAT RED DRAGON

The Book of Revelation has never been understood by the Christian Church. Protestants understand very well that the reference to the Last Judgment upon the Great Harlot means a judgment upon the Roman Catholic hierarchy. But they do not know that their generally accepted belief of Faith Alone, which has been described in these pages as to its evils, *is* the Great Dragon. It is not to be wondered at that the Book of Revelation has been to them largely a sealed book, except as to the fate of the Roman Church in its final end. Of course, it is a sealed book to the Roman Church whose adherents are not encouraged to read it.

The most fantastic interpretations have been made of the book by Protestants whose eyes are closed as to its spiritual content. It never occurs to them that the Protestant Church *so far as this central belief of Faith Alone is concerned* should also be condemned as completely as the Roman Church. The book pictures the end of the First Christian Age brought to its end by the evils and falsities of the two leading branches of the nominal Christian Church.

It must be understood that both the Roman and Protestant churches are condemned in the Last Judgment described in Revelation because of *their evil teachings* and the *conduct of their leaders in confirming those evil teachings*. This does not mean that there are not vast multitudes of sincere people in both churches who have realized the Christian life. The judgment is upon religious *systems* which have falsified the Christian religion and destroyed its effectiveness. Whatever may be said of the Roman Church as to its falsities and evils, what could be worse than the teaching that religion is not a matter of life, but of belief without the need, and even without the possibility, of co-operating with the Lord in living well? This is the doctrine of Faith Alone.

In this New Age the nature of the Last Judgment has been re-

vealed through a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Emanuel Swedenborg. Little serious attention should be paid to the claims of interpreters of the Christian religion simply because they claim to be God-directed and God-inspired. It is essential that what they claim appears to be in harmony with reason and with the Word of God. Even then their claims should be examined in a microscopic way; their beliefs compared with other beliefs; their claims thoroughly investigated as to reasonableness and probability; and compared with the basic teachings of the Sacred Scriptures. Are the teachings coming to the world through Swedenborg rational and scriptural? What is the testimony of thoughtful people as to the man and his work? It is desirable to know what position he holds in the world of thought, what students of his writings have to say about him. Any encyclopedia will give general information, but the opinions of reliable men are worthwhile.

The Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1911, says:

"Swedenborg was in many respects the most remarkable man of his own or any age." Ralph Waldo Emerson, among many other astounding things, wrote: "The most remarkable step in the religious history of recent ages is that made by the genius of Swedenborg." Thomas Carlyle wrote: "More truths are confessed in his writings than those of any other man." Edwin Markham said: "Swedenborg was one of the two or three greatest intellects that have appeared upon the planet." Balzac tells us: "Swedenborg undoubtedly epitomizes all the religions, or rather the one religion of humanity." Henry Ward Beecher said: "No man can know the theology of the nineteenth century who has not read Swedenborg." A distinguished Episcopalian divine, R. Heber Newton, wrote: "The first really new conception of the character of immortality given to the world for eighteen centuries came through . . . Swedenborg . . . Swedenborg's thought has been slowly leavening the great churches of Christianity in the Western world." Another distinguished Episcopalian clergyman, Joseph Fort Newton, says of Swedenborg's writings: "They helped me to interpret the doctrines of our Christian faith as nothing else has ever done." But similar testimonies could be applied

without limit. At least one can say that thoughtful people regard his message as superlative. And therefore we present his interpretation of the 12th chapter of the Book of Revelation as at least worthy of the most serious consideration, certainly consistent with the facts in the case and deserving of deepest study, despite one's prejudices.

The story in the 12th chapter of Revelation is of the woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. In Swedenborg's *Apocalypse Revealed*, we read that the woman represents the Lord's New Church—or the New Christian Dispensation succeeding the old and vastated church or dispensation, which New Church is later known as the New Jerusalem in the 21st chapter. Swedenborg tells us that everywhere in the Word a woman signifies the Church, or the reception of the Lord's life,—the Lord the bridegroom and the Church His wife. This understanding of the woman as symbolizing the Church is everywhere received. To be clothed with the sun means to be clothed with the Divine Love which is signified by the sun because of its heat and creative power as representing the Divine Love. The moon under the woman's feet—its light derived from the sun—tells us of the New Church founded upon Faith in the Lord and about to be on the earth. The crown of twelve stars represents the *completeness* of the *knowledges* (stars) of Divine good and Divine truth from the Word.

The woman was travailing and about to bring forth a man child, the *child* representing the *new teaching* of the Christian religion about to be brought forth, the *travailing* signifying the *resistance* on the part of those opposed to the new understanding of religion. We can well understand that a new doctrine revealing the iniquity of the doctrine of Faith Alone would be resisted by those who accept Faith Alone.

Swedenborg tells us that the Great Dragon signifies those *who make God three, and who make Faith saving, but not love to the neighbor with it.* The two essentials of the New Church, and its doctrine, the man-child, are (1) *that God is one in Jesus:* (Did not Paul say: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? ) and (2) *that true religion is love to God and to the neighbor in*

*thought and deed.* (Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.")

Thus religion is covered by obedience to the Ten Commandments, both in the letter and in spirit, and thus to the Two Great Commandments, which Jesus asserts is true religion.

Of course, the *inspiration* to keep these commandments and the *power* to do so are from the Lord alone, whose victory over the hells makes it possible for man so to aspire and so to live, for without Him we can do nothing.

It is true that the church of the past has divided Deity into three separate and distinct Persons—as in the Athanasian creed—"each of whom is by Himself God and Lord". But actually today most churches look upon Jesus as a kind of subordinate Deity, as a Son subject to the Father, despite the fact that He said: "*All* power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." And they look upon the Holy Spirit as subject to both Father and Son, but as a *Person* *separate and distinct* from the Father and the Son.

But they say that God is *One*, even though they *claim that God is divided into three co-equal Uncreate, Infinite and Eternal Beings, making obviously three Divine Beings or Gods*, and yet from many statements, they seem to *feel* that the Son is subordinate and the Holy Spirit still more subordinate.

They somehow cannot realize that God is one as we are, and has three aspects, or phases of His being, just as man has a soul, manifested through a *body*, and has a *life of activity* proceeding from his soul through his body.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LORD IS ONE

The time is come, according to Swedenborg, when the Church must realize that *God is one and indivisible*, just as is a man made in the Divine image and likeness; and also that God projected Himself into human life by self-limitation as Jesus, with three objectives:

- (1) To reveal Himself to men,
- (2) In order to save mankind from the power of the hells, and
- (3) In order to provide an eternal and Divine Dynamo to make the Divine Love and Truth and Power available to man.

No more confusing and misleading idea of the Divine Being can be offered than that of the old teaching that God exists in three separate and distinct individuals "each of whom is by Himself God and Lord". It is like having three separate suns for our solar system instead of one, or three separate centers for a circle. While all Christians say that God is one, many insist that God is three separate, co-equal and distinct Beings. This belief is a part of the "Plan of Salvation."

And yet many, after making that claim, inconsistently enough, make the Son subordinate and the Holy Spirit still more subordinate.

But even that after all is a belief in *Three Separate Divine Beings*.

The Dragon is "red" because of its infernal falsity. It is called "great" because the tenet of Three Gods and Faith Alone are almost universally held.

But why is this frightful beast called a Dragon? The dictionary tells us that a dragon is a mythical monster, of the serpent species, and is regarded even still in some countries as "the embodiment of evil". In the 19th chapter of Revelation the dragon is called "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan". We know that the real nature of the serpent in the Garden of Eden was subtle and insinuating, and as our first parents listened to its voice, they were led by excited self-love to reject the Divine.

In mythology the dragon was frightful in its aspect, threatening

to destroy, and it breathed out smoke and flame in order to reach or frighten its victims at a distance from its claws.

In *Revelation* its *seven* head signified insanity from the truths of the Word falsified, or as the dogma of Faith Alone, and its *ten* horns signified much power, for horns in animal life are the means with which the animal fights. "Ten" covers the idea of "all," as for example, the ten fingers on both hands.

When we read that its tail drew down the third part of the stars of heaven, (this signifying—in another aspect—as purpose, cause and effect—three or "all") and cast them to the earth we learn that by the falsification of the truths of the Word in sinuous reasonings *all* the spiritual knowledge of the good and the true were falsified; but we also learn that practically *all* were of Christendom drawn to accept its infernal teachings.

If one thinks this a fanciful picture, and has no real relation to the church, he should remember that the followers of the Dragon, who accepted the teaching of Luther that Faith Alone saves, came to have great power, for the church became thoroughly imbued with this false teaching. John Calvin, one of the great supporters of this doctrine, who was led to believe that some people were predestined to hell regardless of their lives, or predestined to heaven regardless of their characters, was able to have an opposer of the Dragon, Michael Servetus, burnt at the stake because he opposed the Dragonistic teaching of three Gods.

And people everywhere in the middle ages when Protestantism became powerful became afraid to think for themselves in matters of religion because of the persecution of the Dragonists. History records such persecutions because of denial of accepted dogmas.

But their power is waning despite the fact that hundreds of voices over the radio today constantly broadcast to the entire country this devastating doctrine. And there are many voices in countless pulpits at work to make people believe that they are saved *only* by the Vicarious Atonement, *even though they most inconsistently preach as indispensable repentance and the changed life!*

The two ideas are obviously absolutely opposed. If nothing that a

man can do has any effect in saving him, why follow the injunction of Jesus to repent and change his life? It is far easier to believe in a dogma and get to heaven by a miracle, or acquire a Christian character without effort.

Genuine repentance evidently means to give up one's evil and by the Lord's power to *overcome*. It represents human effort. "He that overcometh", we are told, "shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." That does not sound like the statement that a man can do nothing of good that will contribute one iota to his salvation but is like a stock or stone when it comes to salvation.

When Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me", we can find no trace of the Plan of Salvation, but rather the idea of becoming at one with God by the effort to give up one's evils, which is the conflict involved in bearing the cross, and following Jesus daily in the unselfish life. Christian character, it is perfectly evident, can no more be acquired without personal effort than can an education. If that is true, what about the Plan of Salvation where we have only to *believe*?

## CHAPTER XV

### JUDGMENT UPON THE DRAGON

But we have not finished with the Great Red Dragon. We read in Revelation that this terrifying impersonation of evil stood before the woman to devour her offspring as soon as it should be born. Obviously this means, spiritually, the effort of those in the false belief to extinguish the doctrine of the need to repent and to overcome by the power of Jesus.

But the Dragon was determined to destroy the man-child—the doctrine which Jesus taught, which indeed the whole Bible teaches,—of one God in Jesus and becoming *at-one* with Him by repentance and living the changed life. And so we are told the woman's offspring was caught up unto God and His throne to protect it from the assaults of the Dragon—who is "the Devil and Satan, the Old Serpent," "who deceiveth the whole world."

The world was not ready for it when this new doctrine was first proclaimed in this New Age through Emanuel Swedenborg, and God had to keep it out of sight of men. Swedenborg wrote the *Apocalypse Revealed* in 1766, quite a long while ago, but the Lord permitted it to be largely out of the sight of men. It, and his other works, have been relatively unknown, even though today his books are being circulated by thousands every year. Thus the male-child, the *doctrine of true religion*, was kept away from those who would have profaned and destroyed it.

And then we are told that the woman fled into the wilderness—the woman being the love of the Lord and His truth—"where she hath a place prepared by God." There she was to remain until the fury of the Dragon should abate and it cease to have power to destroy.

But, "there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and they prevailed not, and their place was not found any more in heaven; and the great

dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, that seduceth the whole world."

By *Michael*, Swedenborg tells us, is meant the ministry of a great society of heaven "who confirm from the Word that the Lord Jesus is the God of heaven and earth, and that men ought to live according to the commandments of the Decalogue," and, doing so, they have love to the neighbor and, also, that heavenly perception which is called faith. Faith thus comes into being when people have the Divine love in their hearts. Any other kind of faith is spurious faith.

Faith, Swedenborg tells us, is not believing what we cannot see to be true, but believing, from the Divine love in our hearts, what spiritually we perceive as real, just as one who believes in the reality of things which his natural eyes see. "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

But we have noted that the Great Red Dragon was cast out of heaven by the opposing belief held by Michael and his angels. This is a picture of what we are told actually took place in the spiritual world in 1757; but the heaven from which the Dragon and his crew were cast out was not the true heaven, instead a false heaven created by illusion. The earth into which they fell was not our earth, but a low plane of the world of spirits. For those who are interested in reading Swedenborg's description of the Last Judgment, which he witnessed in 1757, his book entitled "*The Last Judgment*" and "*Continuation Concerning the Last Judgment*" should be read. They can be found in the larger public libraries of the country.

When this Last Judgment was effected, we read in Revelation: "I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." This expresses the joy of the angels of heaven at the overthrow of this monstrous belief and the firm and everlasting setting up of the true Christian religion, which is *the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only God and Saviour*, and *the life according to the commandment* of love to God and the neighbor embraced in the Ten Commandments and in the Two Great Commandments.

## CHAPTER XVI

### OVERCOMING BY THE TRUTH

When people read that the angels overcame the Dragon through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their testimony, it will mean to many that we are saved by the vicarious death of Jesus on the cross and that eternal life is the result of accepting the dogma of Faith Alone, without the need, or possibility, of doing anything of good that will contribute to salvation; but the "blood of the Lamb" means here as elsewhere the Divine love or Divine truth. When one pours out his life's blood, he is pouring out his life and his life involves his love and thought—his conscious life. In the case of Jesus when he poured out his life for us He was giving that which His life represented and involved, His love and His truth.

We are saved as that Divine Love enters into our wills and as His Divine Truth teaches us the way to heaven. Is that not self-evident? We are not saved by His literal blood, as we have seen, for that was small in quantity and disappeared almost immediately.

People who believe in the Vicarious Atonement seem somehow to believe that the literal blood of Jesus cleanses us in some miraculous way. They do not appear to realize that they are thinking of the blood in a mystical way, and that they do not have the literal blood applied. If it is, as it must be, thought of as something of a spiritual nature, what is it? Is it a fanciful something, or is it something practical such as the Divine Love and the Divine Truth which actually constitute the Divine Life? And we see that as the Divine Love enters our will and as the Divine Truth enters our understanding, we become new creatures, and in no other way.

Salvation is always the life of God—His love and His truth—received by man by his free choice and permeating all his thought and life. This is the Lord's blood, and it obviously can be nothing else, since it cannot be His literal blood shed upon the cross. That never washed away sins in a literal way, nor was it offered by one Divine

Being to pacify or appease another Divine Being, for there is only one Divine Being, not Two or Three; and thus there was no Divine Being up in heaven demanding the murder—for that is what the crucifixion of Jesus was—of His innocent Son in order to be able to forgive mankind. In reading Bible texts, which seem to confirm the teaching of salvation by the "blood," the true sense becomes apparent at once if we use the word "life" instead. Salvation by the blood thus becomes salvation by the life of Jesus in our lives.

The whole trouble is that men do not understand the true nature of God, and seek to be saved for heaven by an easy way. In this New Age the true nature of the Divine Being is revealed. God is as to His inmost substance and being nothing else but Love,—Unselfish Love,—which has nothing whatever of Self-Love in it. His Love,—or His nature,—goes out wisely in order to accomplish the purpose that true and sincere love always has, namely, the lasting welfare and happiness of others.

God's purpose therefore is to bless endlessly and completely, and to do so it goes out into the performance of useful things for the beloved. A mother's love is a picture on the human plane of the love of God. How can a loving Heavenly Father demand the death of His children? Can a mother do so? The Trinity in God is Love, Wisdom and Use. The *Father* is the Divine Love, or the soul, as it were, of God. The *Son* is the Divine Wisdom, or the Divine Truth, which goes forth creatively, and is the Logos, the word, the Divine self-expression. The *Holy Spirit* is the loving activity of the *Father* manifested in His coming forth to view as the *Son*. It is the Divine Presence. There are not *three*, but one, just as the soul, body and outgoing spirit of a man are one.

God had to have a revelation of Himself given to His creatures who otherwise could not know an invisible Being. He gave it in the Old Testament through angels and prophets, but the time came when it became necessary, due to the darkness of men's souls, for Him to reveal Himself directly; and to do this it became necessary for Him to provide a channel, or an external instrumentality in the world of nature. Jesus revealed Himself as God: "He that hath seen me hath the Father," and He also said, "No man cometh unto the Father but

by me," just as no one can see or approach our soul except through our body.

In assuming a human nature, with all the weaknesses and tendencies to sin inherited through Mary, it became possible for Him to meet and overcome through temptation-combats the evil, malignant beings of the underworld. This involved His sufferings and His death upon the cross. There was no *substitution*, but an actual *rescue* by the Lord as the champion of mankind. His death did not appease the Father's wrath or offended sense of justice for Jesus was the Father, as He said, "I and the Father are one," or identical. Was not this love, true love, overcoming love, and does it not melt our hearts and arouse in us our love to Him?

Let me close this chapter with certain statements about the nature of God taken from the Lord's revelations of Himself to this New Age which are surprisingly beautiful. Contrast them with the idea of God involved in the old cruel statements in the "Plan of Salvation," or the doctrine of Faith Alone, where a curse is placed upon the human race which God is by His sense of justice unable to avert.

Now hear this:

"With the Lord, when He was in the world, there was no other life than the life of love toward the universal human race, which he burned to save eternity. This is the veriest celestial life . . . Jehovah is nothing else than mercy, which is of love to the universal human race—and that life was one of pure love, which is never possible with any man." And now another:

"From these few statements it can be seen how deluded are those who think, and still more those who believe, and still more those who teach, that God can damn anyone, curse anyone, send anyone to hell, predestine any soul to eternal death, avenge wrongs, be angry, or punish. He cannot even turn Himself away from man, nor look upon him with a stern countenance. These and like things are contrary to His essence; and what is contrary to His essence is contrary to His very Self."

"Jehovah God—or the Lord—never curses anyone, never leads anyone into temptation, never punishes anyone, and still less does He curse anyone. All this is done by the infernal crew, for such things

can never proceed from the Fountain of mercy, peace and goodness. The reason of its being said in the Word that Jehovah God not only turns away His face, is angry, punishes, tempts, but also kills and even curses, is that men may believe that the Lord governs and disposes all and everything in the universe, even evil itself, punishments, and temptations, and when they have received this most general idea, may afterwards learn how He governs and disposes all things by turning the evil of punishment and of temptation into good. In teaching and learning the Word, the most general truths must come first and therefore the literal sense is full of such things."

We speak of a mother's love, or of the attitude of the father of the Prodigal Son, but here is the Lord's attitude toward us:

"The Lord, from the Divine Love, or mercy, wills to have all near to Himself; so that they do not stand at the doors, that is, in the first heaven; but He wills that they should be in the third and if it were possible, not only with Himself, but in Himself. Such is the Divine Love, or the Lord's Love."

Is it not time that the world should know the truth as to the real nature of God and turn away from false concepts of Him? and thus turn away from a "Plan of Salvation" misrepresenting Him and cunningly worked out to deceive men into believing that they cannot co-operate with Him in overcoming their evils of life? Forever it is to take up the cross of self-denial of hurtful lusts. "Blessed are they that DO His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be His God, and he shall be my son." "Ye shall know them by their fruits." Salvation is the life of God in the soul of man and it is obviously nothing else.

## THE TRANSLATORS OF THE BIBLE

The men who have translated the Bible into modern tongues have been sincere and honest to a degree that honors God and man. With a devotion and a dedication to their task, throughout the middle ages and modern times, they have exhibited an honesty, an integrity, which is surpassing in its loyalty to the highest ideals of conduct. They have tried, and are still striving, to give the exact ideas incorporated in the Holy Word, without bias or prejudice.

Nevertheless as human beings, with certain fixed ideas derived from tradition, it was impossible to escape from the bias received from the almost universally accepted theology which they believed to be the perfect expression of the Divine thought.

The influence of St. Anselm in his concept, which he introduced into Christian theology before modern translations were begun, of God as an inexorable pitiless King who demanded satisfaction for violated law, thus a man who believed that at-one-ment, or reconciliation, meant atonement or expiation in order to satisfy Eternal Justice, is shown inevitably in their translations. Pre-conceived opinions are difficult to escape from in the exercise of human judgment.

And it is almost impossible for us to read the Bible without seeing the confirmation of what has thus been subtly introduced into it by translation. The way to prove that mistranslations exist is to give examples of them.

In Romans 3:25 we find in the Authorized Version the word "propitiation" used. It is precisely the same word as is used in Hebrews 9:5 as "mercy seat." It is the Greek word Hilasterion, meaning primarily "mercy seat." Why should it not have been translated in Romans 3:25 as "mercy seat?" We find in the English and American Revised Versions, which largely follow the Authorized or King James Version of 1611, the same usage. *This translation has chiefly influenced the English-speaking world and fastened the heathen idea of "propitiation" upon religious people.* This is made worse in the

latest Revision, called the Revised Standard Version, where the word used is "expiation." Why?

However, we find that other translators were not satisfied with rendering Hilasterion as "propitiation" or "expiation." Weymouth translates it truly as "mercy seat." Fenton also as "mercy seat." The XX Century as "a means of reconciliation." Ronald Knox likewise as "a means of reconciliation." Goodspeed as "a sacrifice of reconciliation."

The original idea of the mercy seat in the Tabernacle, placed above the Two Tables of Stone whereon were inscribed the Ten Commandments, was the Divine dwelling place, and thereby is represented the throne of God in the Tabernacle where He would hear prayer and from which He would speak words of comfort. The golden lid of the Ark of the Covenant was evidently intended to picture the seat of God in His attitude of mercy toward the human race. This seat of gold was made suggestive of the overshadowing Presence of God by golden cherubim, one on either side, whose outstretched wings extended over the mercy seat.

The Law was necessary for man's welfare, covering the principles according to which man must live in order to receive heavenly blessing, but by the mercy seat was represented God as the All-Merciful, manifesting the infinite love of God. *It did not suggest Jesus in a pleading attitude to God, or His death on the cross as an expiation to God, but God's merciful attitude to man, thus not propitiation, or expiation, but the perpetual Divine Mercy, His mercy even in man's failure to keep the Law.*

We thus get the idea of Paul in writing, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Not only in this instance, but everywhere else, the Bible was translated by men affected by the point of view of St. Anselm. They could not see God except as an Avenger of violated law, angry with the wicked and determined to punish them to eternity for breaking law. It was the idea of legal satisfaction. They did not realize—perhaps did not even think about it—that the punishment for the violation of law is not from God, but the result which follows from that

violation, as inevitable as the suffering which follows when one thrusts his hand into the fire.

Thus by this translation the mercy seat was made to be—a truly heathenish idea—man's need to propitiate Inexorable Justice by expiation for the sin of Adam and for his own failure to live according to the laws of life.

The basic idea of the Mercy Seat is that Jesus is the manifestation of the divine mercy for our waywardness, or missing the mark. Jesus is not the expiation of our sins to another Deity who demands our death. But God coming forth to view in mercy in order to beg men to come back to their Heavenly Father's home and happiness. If it were not so, why was the word "mercy" used? Thus by the "mercy seat" God appears in Jesus as Mercy Itself, supplicating men to come into heavenly order. Jesus was thus the Mercy Seat, not as the Supplicator to another Divine Being, or as the Expiation for man's sins, but as representing God's effort to rescue men from their enemies of the underworld, indeed as God pleading with men, a perpetual Saviour of the human race, the supreme expression of the Divine mercy.

There are two other passages in the New Testament in the Authorized Version where "propitiation" is used, and "expiation" in the Revised Standard Version—the most recent. These passages are I John 2:2 and 4:10. The first one reads: "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." To many minds this proves the truth of the Plan of Salvation. Let us examine it.

The Greek word here used in the original is Hilasmus, of kindred origin with Hilasterion, from the same root word Hileos, meaning primarily "mercy," or "to be merciful." Translating Hilasmus as "propitiation" or "expiation" emphasizes the work of Jesus as Expiation rather than as Conciliation. Why not follow the true meaning of Mercy and render it as expressing God's desire to be merciful, not by demanding death for sin, but as His desire for reconciliation with man? Render it, for example, as, "He is the reconciliation for our sins?" This would conform to Paul's suggestion of God's desire to have us reconciled to Him.

With the translators of the Bible imbued with the idea of the truth of the Plan of Salvation as developed by the reasoning of St. Anselm, it was almost inevitable that they should have projected his idea into their translations. Almost inevitable also that those who read those translations should see his idea as Divinely placed in the Word of God: indeed, as the true idea of the Word of God.

Men forget that Jesus in His teachings was not preaching the wrath of God, or Eternal Vindication of violated law, but the love of God in seeking men to save them from themselves, and from their cruel enemies of hell. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus in the Parables never suggests that men are saved by the acceptance of a dogma—or by substitution of the innocent for the guilty. Instead in the parable of the House upon the Rock He shows men the imperative need to base their lives upon the keeping of His commandments of love—"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them." He did not even remotely suggest the Plan of Salvation.

In the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, who were they who inherited the kingdom? Those who claimed Salvation through Faith Alone and the blood of Jesus? Or those who lived in love to others? Not there or in the other parables did He suggest salvation by the Plan of Salvation. The Plan of Salvation is a human deduction based upon a human theory, but it has proved deadly in its effect in showing men that their living has nothing whatever to do with entering heaven hereafter.

When therefore we read in the New Testament that Jesus was the propitiation for our sins, let us remember that He was the coming forth of God Himself to bring men back to Himself, forgiving and forgetting their waywardness even more truly than the Father of the Prodigal Son forgave his son.

Take the word "atonement." Its obvious meaning in English is at-one-ment, compounded of three words, "at" and "one" and "ment," to become at-one, or of one mind with God. It has been changed by usage in connection with the Plan of Salvation to mean "expiation" or "propitiation." It means—in its original form—basic agreement of one person with another through adjustment in love and thought.

The word written without separating the three separate parts of which it is composed—or as "atonement" instead of "at-one-ment"—has come to mean definitely expiation. This has to come to pass because of the ideas of the Plan of Salvation worked into it so as to fix its original meaning as "expiation."

In Hebrew the word is from a primitive root "to cover." Its meaning is to "cover" either by "expiation" or by "appeasement" but also and chiefly "to forgive," "pardon," "disannul," "be merciful," "reconcile." Its usage as either "expiation" or "to be merciful," depends upon one's ideas of God as Vengeance or Love. In Greek the word is Katallage, occurring in Romans 5:11 as "atonement," meaning from the lexicon "adjustment," "restoration to Divine favor." The word is from Katallazo, meaning "to change mutually," "compound a difference," "reconcile." This shows that the correct word in English is "at-one-ment" and not "atonement."

People have come to think of the animal sacrifices mentioned in the Old Testament as means of expiating sins, just as the heathen thought of them, but actually *they symbolize the offering up to the Lord* by means of the innocent animals of sincere love and by the meal offerings of true thoughts. *This symbolization represented true worship.* The Lord permitted them only to save the Israelites from idolatry. His true attitude toward animal sacrifice is shown by such statements as this in Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? . . . Your hands are full of blood. Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." And He tells them that if they will put away the evil of their doings from before the Lord, "though their sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This result comes, not from expiation, or an atonement, but by at-one-ment arrived at by a changed life where evil is forever put away. To use the word "atone-

ment" is to pervert the meaning of Scripture. The word "at-one-ment"—to come into oneness by means of repentance and reform—alone conveys the true idea of the Bible.

The elaborate symbolism of the great Day of At-one-ment obviously picturizes sorrow for sin, sincere repentance and promise of reform. For that it was given, to have men turn from their evil ways, and so become at-one with God. But many doubtless held to the low ideal of heathendom that God could be placated only by *blood atonement* and *expiation*.

But why take that idealism into the Christian religion and make it the supreme condition of eternal life as is done by means of the Plan of Salvation? The Lord throughout the history of Israel showed them that what He desired was life according to the Ten Commandments. In Micah He sums up religion—after rejecting animal sacrifice forever—as justice, mercy and humility. And yet in the Plan of Salvation the murder of the Son of God is made to constitute the Christian religion itself. Its adherents claim that no one can get into heaven except by "faith in the shed blood of Christ"—thus by acceptance of Jesus' death as expiation, and this as the only condition of admission!

Jesus reminded the Jews that Deity did not require expiation and atonement, but desired instead to extend mercy,—"If ye had known what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." The reference was to Hosea, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Does not this show that the idea of expiation behind the Plan of Salvation is man-derived and contrary to the Divine idea and nature? And yet the ideas of the Plan of Salvation are written by translators into many scriptures, so that one reading those passages sees only the suggestion of an expiation, as manifestly as any heathen idea of religion by propitiation of their deities. From a thousand pulpits we hear that we are saved only by "the shed blood of Christ," and that our works have nothing to do with our salvation, whereas Jesus said, "Wherefore by their fruits—or works—ye shall know them." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

## THE TRUE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

The true Christian religion is made up of Three Things,—God, Ourselves and Others. In the past it has been made up chiefly of Two Things,—God and Ourselves. Leaving out "Others" it has lost its true objective,—left out the Divine objective, the Divine nature and purpose.

God created the universe out of love, out of selfless love. Because of the nature of His love, being incapable of self-centered love, He had to have others outside of Himself to love. Therefore it was that He created the universe to be a theater of action in which He might express His love. In this way it is that man was created as God's beloved, to be the objective of the Divine love, upon whom God might bestow His love in boundless measure.

With this idea in mind it is quickly seen how completely different are the viewpoints of God and man, based upon what God is and what man through his fallen nature has become. Man has become as to his human inheritance thoroughly self-centered in all that he feels, thinks and does, whereas God is infinitely and forever boundless love for others, with a nature so different from man's that man cannot easily comprehend it.

In attempting to bring man back to a realization of his true nature, at first undeveloped, which is without form and order, it became necessary for God to be infinitely patient. This is pictured in the first chapter of Genesis. That chapter is dedicated to a description of the six steps necessary to bring man into a state of self-realization. There we read: "And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep". The whole chapter might be called the story of Man's Awakening to the consciousness and life of himself as primarily a child of God.

Men in their so-called "natural" state are very much like the Prodigal Son when he first went into the riotous life of the "far country." They have no true idea at all of the true values of life. Therefore the need of the Divine to adapt Himself to the understanding of fallen men. This is why the Bible is written in its natural sense to men as they are and why they misunderstand God. Their

idea of God is based largely upon what they are. They cannot understand a God who is selfless love. That is why *man* created a religion of atonement, or expiation. He knew what he would wish on the part of anyone who offended him.

And in the religions of the past man has thought only of placating a God whom he feared. Religion became for him a method of propitiation. Finally theologians made the Christian religion to be an explanation of how as in a fairy story God had managed to relieve man of all obligation to consider seriously his own conduct. He was forgiven by the acceptance of a dogma and he was saved by "grace". All he had to do was to believe it. Certain systems of religion definitely stated that nothing that man could do in the way of changed conduct could possibly have anything whatever to do with his salvation.

But the true Christian religion is the changed life. The changed life means a changed attitude toward God as our Heavenly Father, and our relationship to others. Religion begins with the realization of what we are in our attitudes and conduct towards God. This results in repentance. This is carried forward into reformation. It eventually becomes entire surrender to Him. But it sometimes stops here. It becomes engrossed with man's own intimate relationship with God, and forgets the Divine objective of service to others. And in that way it has completely failed to change civilization. Man engrossed in his own happy state forgets why he was delivered from bondage,—forgets the supreme purpose of life,—the sharing with all others of the good things of life which God has bestowed on him. And without that his religion becomes self-love.

The trouble is that religion has been made to be a matter of God's forgiveness instead of the changed life whose supreme happiness should be service and sharing. It has lost the Divine spirit.

It is true that religious people strive to share with others their perverted story of God's forgiveness, based on a legalistic fiction instead of a changed life—of being saved by grace, and with nothing else to do except to smile and be happy. They speak of brotherhood, but their brotherhood is largely made up of good feeling towards others who share their religious beliefs.

We live in a world whose motto is, "Each man for himself; let the devil take the hindmost." This is its animating motive. This is the animating motive of millions of people who believe that they are "saved by grace". It is a do-nothing religion so far as dedication to the principle of securing justice to all others is concerned.

Jesus taught that every man must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. That meant to achieve a new motivation in life, namely, "Each for all, and all for each". That is the motto of heaven. And the life of heaven on earth can result only from the adoption of such a motto. By the love of others alone do we become Christians in the truest sense. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another".

This is the true Christian religion, a sincere brotherhood.

This is a New Age; overwhelmingly and unmistakably new, shown in ten thousand ways. World changes have occurred of such a nature that no one can successfully question the advances of the last century and a half. We are not living in the kind of world that existed before the American Revolution. Among other things old tyrannies have been overthrown, in the religious world as well as in the realm of political life. Men have been set free. This is all in keeping with the advances made in industry and agriculture and transportation and in communication by wire and wireless and radio. It would seem fitting that there should be a new understanding of religion when a new understanding in all other branches of human thought and activity has taken place.

Immediately that it is suggested that there could possibly be a change in the understanding of religion a bitter antagonism is aroused in the breasts of warm adherents of the old beliefs. They say, "Is not religion eternal, as eternal as the Bible itself? God does not change. This man would change the religion established by the Saviour two thousand years ago. The old-time religion is good enough for me." They do not consider that the Christian religion has been variously understood by hundreds of different sects during the centuries. The Jews of the time of Jesus did not think it possible that

their religion, as they understood and practiced it, could be relatively forgotten. Who of them could foresee the effect of the mission of Jesus in the world? Each religionist believes that his idea of religion is the only true one and when the suggestion is made that he can possibly be mistaken he feels that the wisdom of God is being attacked. Without the use of spiritual dynamite civilization would have been hopelessly crystallized ages ago.

The men of this world must learn that the self-centered, self-loving, self-serving life means the life of hell on earth and hell hereafter. And that the life of service to all others from love to God and the neighbor is the only life that brings enduring happiness.

Thus men must come to seek the welfare and happiness of all others rather than their own by service to them from the love of God in their hearts. This joy in service must become the delight of their lives. It is the love of sharing, which makes the joy of heaven.

The neighbor who we are to love is not necessarily the person of another but his eternal good, that which brings lasting happiness to him, the life of orderly and useful living which is the life of Jesus in his soul. We cannot love the disagreeable and evil qualities in another, but we can love his reform, the giving up of his evil. Thus we can love that which is truly and sincerely and permanently good for all men. And we should seek that good at all times and everywhere.

Oneness with all others should be a goal in life, be they white or black, red, brown, or yellow, whether they be of our own nationality or race or creed. We are to think of them as children of God and strive for the eternally good in them as we strive for our own. This does not mean to identify ourselves with their falsities or evils of character or life, but to seek the life of God in their souls. It means to seek social justice, that all men may share in the bounties which our loving Heavenly Father has provided for all His children.

I can fancy our great industrial leaders of today, instead of seeking by every method feasible to exploit mankind, seeking to serve universal mankind by working to provide everyone everywhere with decent homes, with abundant means for living as they themselves

live, with appropriate clothing, with medical skill, with opportunity for useful self-expression.

The world starves, suffers, endures.

Shall we ask in bitterness if the great aim of Christians the world over is—or has been—to feed them, or give them ample opportunity to provide themselves with food, to see that they are clothed and given abundant opportunity for useful self-expression? Myriads of Christians do have such a desire, but profit is the great end of life for most people,—even nominal Christians—profit too often at the expense of others. We produce goods for scarcity in order to make prices high. We seek to extend our markets all over the world for the sake of private profit. Why do nominal Christians seek to continue conditions which mean universal misery? It would seem that anyone with any degree of the spirit of Jesus would seek to make a better world and live only to serve mankind. Have ecclesiasticism and ritualism and piety been emphasized rather than the universal welfare of the nations? What would Jesus do in this situation?

Let us have ecclesiasticism, but realize that in itself it is not Christianity, merely a form. Let us have piety, but such as leads to unselfish sharing with others. Let us read the Bible for the sake of learning the will of God in order that we may better serve and love. Brotherhood is what this old world needs, and will have in spite of man's hardness of heart and cruelty. True religion is the casting out of the selfish spirit and the development under God of the unselfish spirit. Swedenborg puts it in this way: "Heaven and heavenly joy first begin in man when regard for self dies in the uses we perform." The unselfish life of service to all others from the love of God in our hearts is the true Christian religion. It is the religion of Jesus for this New Age.

THE END

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